

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Odes of
Appreciation
of
Robert Burns

By
William Beattie

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**UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL
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Appreciations of Robert Burns

By WILLIAM BEATTIE



“ Were a’ the poets met thegither,
O’ ilka age an’ race an’ clime,
They’d deck his brow wi’ wreath o’ heather,
The Laureate Singer o’ a’ time.”

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THE first of these annual odes was read on the occasion of the Poet's Tri-Jubilee, celebrated by the Toronto Burns' Club, January 25th, 1909. It was also published in my yearly Scottish-American card. Since then I have composed an ode for every 25th of January and published it similarly.

At the close of my seventeen years' service as travelling agent of that patriotic paper—the pleasantest period of my life—I have compiled these eight odes in this booklet as a tribute to the memory of Scotia's Bard; not forgetting the hundreds of couthie Scots I have foregathered with since 1899, and the many friends dwelling between Windsor, Ont., and Halifax, N.S., whom I hope to keep till the day I dee.

Faithfully Yours,

WM. BEATTIE

**Written for Burns' One Hundred and
Fiftieth Anniversary, Jan. 25th, 1909.**

ODE 1.

A hunder years ha'e flown awa
An juist half o' anither,
Sin' blast o' Janwar' win' did blaw
Snell hansel on oor brither.

His name was Rab-a cantie chiel;
We've never kent his marrow,
Wha, seein, couldna help but feel
For man or beastie's sorrow.

The ourie cattle in the cauld,
The wee uprootit gowan,
An' limpin' hare ilk story tauld,
That set his hert alowein.

For weel he kent auld Nature's face
In a' her moods sae changin':
His muse has hallowed ilka place
Where'er his steps gaed rangin'.

Sweet Afton flows amang her braes
Mair gently for his singin';
Far centuries shall invoke his lays,
Fresh tribute to him bringin'.

See lowly cottar ploddin' hame—
Hoo welcome is the comin'
Tae stachrin weans an' lovin' dame;
Wi' very glee they're hummin'!

The Poet's warmest wish we read—
His fervent invocation—
That heaven wad aye the toilers lead
And gaird frae vice the nation.

Doon's banks an' braes are fresh and fair
As when he sang their praises;
An' mony anither hert's been sair
Since wandrin' thro' their mazes.

We yet can hear the Brigs o' Ayr
In contramacious passion,
Wi' ither flytin, deil-may-care,
Like twa auld carlines clashin'.

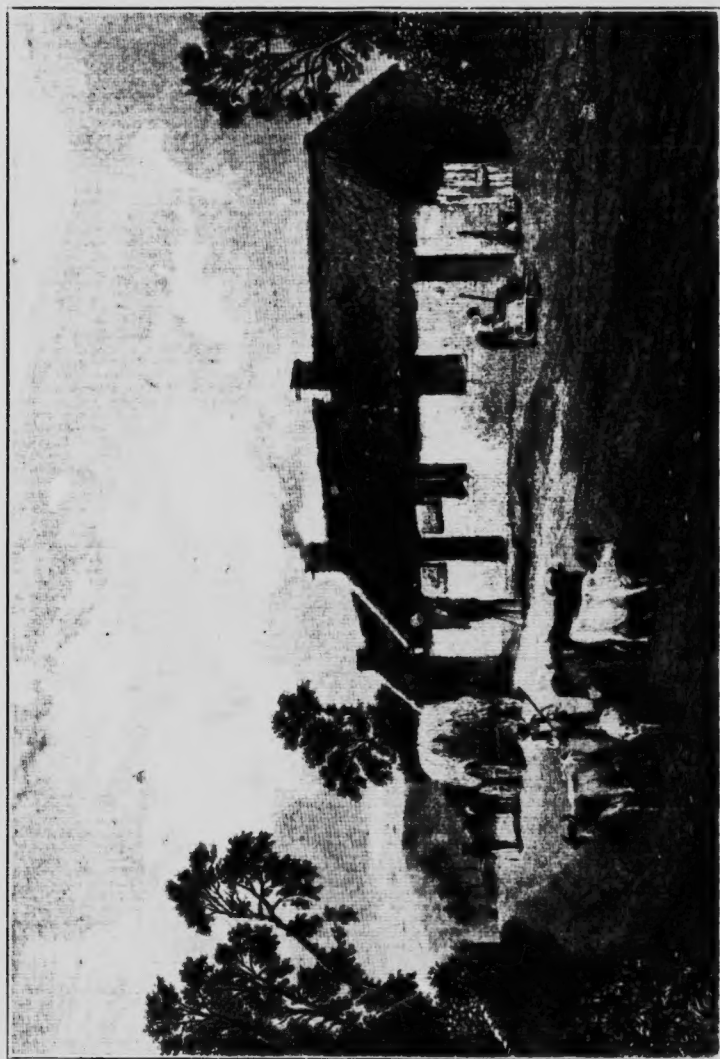
Heroic Tam-o' Shanter still
Bestrides his grey mare Meggie,
An' Jolly Beggars drink their fill
O' Poesie Nan's Kill-igie.

The Twa Dogs sage their tales relate
Jocose wi' yin anither,
Are leevin' still an' tae his date
Repeat their cracks thegither,

Brave Scots Wha Hae yet stirs oor bluid,
Keeps flame o' freedom burnin'
As when oor sires the foe withstood,
Prood Edward's legions scornin'.

He sang the britherhood o' man,
That it wad yet be law, that
Time an' tide wad lift the ban
An' men be free for a' that.

The Immortal Memory! Let us toast
His Tri-Jubilee birthday, man—
The King o'a' the lyric host!
An' wha will say him nay, man?



" 'Twas there a blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hansel in on Robin."

**Burns' One Hundred and Fifty-first
Anniversary, Jan. 25th, 1910.**

ODE 2.

Again the welcome natal night returns,
Which every clime with loyal gladness hails,
The nations celebrate the birth of Burns,
Exchange their greetings over seas and dales.
This very hour ten thousand festal boards
Unite triumphant, crowning king of song
The Bard who scattered from poetic hoards
Rich treasures which the ages shall prolong.
He was the muse of Nature's chosen child;
Interpreter of secrets hid from men;
To whom revealed his wood-notes warbling wild,
Deep thoughts forth issuing from his living pen.
No thing too small to scape' his ardent eye;
The daisy meeting him in evil hour,
The mouse whose home and store in ruin lie;
To save them now forever past his power.
And e'en the rough burr thistle in the field,
His patriotic ardor stirs, and fain
Is he the worthless, troublous weed to shield—
For Scotland's sake the symbol shall remain.
He sympathized with all opprest with woe—
Or Queen or peasant suffering lot severe—
The beauteous Mary—victim of her foe,
For whose unhappy fate he drops a tear.

The Birks o' Aberfeldy yet are green,
Where he wi' lassie spent the lee-lang day;
The songs that glorified his bonnie Jean,
Perennial bloom like flowers in Merry May.
By winding Nith's sweet stream where oft he
strayed,
"To wait the eve or hail the cheerful dawn,"
Where thro' each dell or dew-besprinkled glade
He marked the timid hare or gentle fawn.
He had the grateful heart for kindness shown,
Rememb'ring well each deed benevolent.
The minstrel for Glencairn did sadly moan,
And for his patron's death with tears lament.
His scathing satire rent the flimsy veil,
That o'er hypocrisy its shelter threw;
With manly might all shams he did impale,
Pretenders holding up to scorner's veiw.
His master hand struck every note that's found,
Within the gamut of the human heart;
And, playing on each vibrant chord, he crowned
Himself the monarch of the lyric art.
He is our country's great immortal Bard;
For which he lived and wrote each glowing line—
The social song that all the world has heard—
The universal anthem, Auld Lang Syne.



"The priest-like father reads the sacred page"

**Burns' One Hundred and Fifty-Second
Anniversary, Jan. 25th, 1911.**

ODE 3.

Lang had auld Scotia on it waited,
At last the joyfu' day arrives!
Tho' lowly born yet greatly fated
'His birth when stormy Boreas drives.

In snawy chariot owre the cabin,
Where oped his infant e'en on licht,
An gossip keekit loof o' Rab in,
Ere mony 'oors had taen their flight.

Fu' weel the sibyl spaed his fortin',
A carlin fell an' wise was she;
Fate wi' the lad wad aft be sportin,
Yet's heart aboon it aye wad be.

He cam like brilliant boreans,
Tae brichten Scotland's darksome night,
Immortalizin' Bruce an' Wallace;
Wha focht an' de'ed for freedom's richt.

He was the lealest poet ever,
That sang the lays o' love an' wark;
Intent the toilers tae deliver,
Frae servitude's degradin' mark.

He feared nae skaith in fechtin battle
Wi' bigots of baith kirk an' state,
But held his ain amid the rattle
O' factions fierce an' faced stern fate.

He prophesied a guid time comin'
When worth and sense owre a' the earth,
Wad bear the gree for man or woman
Instead o' titles or high birth.

A Scot baith true an' patriotic,
He lo'ed oor birthland unco weel:
Yet hated ilka thing despotic,
For a' mankind his heart did feel.

He peetied e'en the very deevil:
In yon laigh den mang sulphry fume,
An' hoped that he, the prince o' evil,
Micht yet escape the fiery spume.

Hoo short his life - its closing dreary!
Owre weel he kent the pangs of grief,
Yet spite o' a' 'mang cronies cheery:
Oor Rab was shair to be the chief.

An' sic a legacy he left us,
Inspirin' independence grand!
Past time o' it has ne'er bereft us,
Thro' a' the future 'twill expand.

Were a' the poets met thegither:
O' ilka age an' race an' clime,
They'd deck his brow wi' wreath o' heather,
The Laureate Singer o' a' time.



"Foregathered ance upon a time"

**Burns' One Hundred and Fifty-third
Anniversary, Jan. 25th, 1912.**

Ode 4.

Again Fame's trump peals out his natal day!
Obeying welcome summons as of yore,
We gladly meet our homage loyal to pay
And gather round the social board once more.

No perfect hero claim we as our own
No lofty dreamer soaring 'mid the spheres;
He reigns supreme upon the people's throne,
'Mongst whom he dwelt and shared their joys and
tears.

The stormy welcome of that Janwar' night
A fatal omen of misfortunes dire,
Which haunted him thro' life's short, fitful fight
And quenched too soon his glowing heart of fire.

How brave the spirit in that manly breast
To combat ancient wrongs that made men mourn!
Too well his acts defied severest test,
Of sacrifice for freedom sternly borne;

The glow of friendship's sacred flame he felt;
With comrades blithe he joyed to meet awhile;
And worshipping at Love's own shrine he knelt
Among the shady woods of Ballochmyle.

Wherever suff'ring tortured man or beast
It claimed from him responsive sigh benign,
For all God's creatures, e'en the very least,
Aroused in him compassion deemed divine.

The sweetest of all singers was our Bard!
Wit, humor, pathos, satire, all combined!
But oh, how incommensurate the reward
For heritage bequeathed to all mankind!

This second century since he breathed his last
Prophetic utt'rance to his Bonnie Jean
His fame secure has grown as decades passed
And annual triumphs keep his mem'ry green.

He sang the praise of Honesty and Truth—
The upright man, tho' poor, of men is king,
While others high in station are, in sooth,
But parasites who only evil bring.

The book of Nature open to his gaze—
Green bank and brae with fragrant flowers o'er-
spread!
The wood and cataract—themes of his lays
Are vocal still tho' long their poet's dead.

Yet living he, crowned with immortal youth,
Perpetual warring with oppression strong,
Shall see, indeed, that brighter day when Truth
Victorious shall reign o'er vanquished Wrong.



"Three blither lads that l'ee lang nicht
Ye wadna' fand in Christendee."

**Burns' One Hundred and Fifty-fourth
Anniversary, Jan. 25th, 1913.**

ODE 5

The warl' ance mair aroon' the sun has rowed its
annual race;
An' we, nae doot, wi' it hae spun through unkent
miles o' space
Sin' last we met tae celebrate oor ain dear Robbie's
birth,
Whase fame keeps growin' like a spate tae a' pairts
o' the earth.
We're gathered here this Janwar' nicht, forgettin'
Daddie Care;
Wi' pleasure ilka face looks bricht, the jovial mirth
tae share.
Th' immortal memory we toast o' lad was born in
Kyle.
Whase natal nicht will ne'er be lost nor place on
fame's lang file,
He sang as sweet the laverock sings in native mel-
low notes;
Roond a' the globe his music rings, owre ilka clime
it floats
His sangs are sung on banks o' Nile aneath the
tropic rays
And Arctic wastes for mony a mile hae heard Ye
Banks an' Braes.
His lowein' e'en like searchlights twain, than ithers
seein' mair,
Made Nature's secrets a' his ain wi' insicht deep
and rare.
Whae'er afore him ever thocht t' immortalize a
mouse,
His ain ploughshare whase ruin wrocht on winter
store an' house?

But sma'er still the insect grey a crawlin' unco
crouse,
That he was fain tae sneak that day the sacrilee-
gious louse!
He wished some po'oor wad gie's the gift tae see
oorself's as weel
As ithers see us, syne hoo swift oor pride wad doon-
ward speil,
Yae time he wrote an unco screed anent a cronic
braw
Tam Samson, sportsman, mason deid! a sad
catastrophie!
He even printed epitaph Tam's saul was safe in
heaven,
Auld Killie gied a joyfu' laugh - for Samson was
still leevin.
Through a' Rab's life, owre short indeed; his sym-
pathy ran wild
For ilka yin that stood in need, be it man or beast
or child.
While changin' seasons come an 'gang an' nations
live on earth
The pilgrim stream shall flow alang tae veesit place
o' birth-
The cottage near tae Bonnie Doon, the flytin'
Brigs O'Ayr,
Dumfries, that auld and famous toon on banks o'
Nith sae fair,
There sleepin' 'neath St. Michael's sward within
that sacred shrine,
Lies a' could dee o' Scotia's Bard sin' ninety six
lang syne.



" We twa hae paidl't in the burn "

**Burns' One Hundred and Fifty-fifth
Anniversary, Jan. 25th, 1914.**

ODE 6.

Dear Rab, anither year has whirled:
I'm ready wi' my annual screed, man
An' we still leevin on this warld,
Forgather here owrejoyed indeed, man,
Your glorious mem'ry tae revive
On ither twenty-fifth o' Janwar'.
Rejoicin' we are still alive,
An' O' the past twal months the nane waur.
It wad hae been mishanter sad
If on that nicht o' nine an' fifty
No you but juist some orra lad
'D been born, we'd missed oor brawest giftie!
What wad puir Scotland dune without
Her dearest poet--Rantin Robin --
The King O' hearts? Oor tongues are mute
An, ilka breist upheaves wi'sobbin.
The sacred stream twixt banks o' Doon.
Wad wimpl't sangless tae the ocean:
Sweet Afton 'neath the birks aboon,
Obscure had run wi' gurglin' motion,
Baith rivulets sae meikle famed
An' sung in cottage, ha' an' palace,
Had never by the warld been named
An' ne'er been maid or lover's solace.
Wha'd tellt us about Bonnie Jean
Or sung for us her am'rous praises
The blithest, brawest, bonniest quean

E'er wander't woodlands deck't wi' daisies?
Wha could hae writ that merry Sang
Ca'd Corn Rigs on night o' Lammas,
Or showed us the infernal thrang
An' glowrin' at them Shanter Tammas?
The Deil cam' fiddlin' thro' the toon
Rampagin', grim in search o' prize, man,
Rab in the grip o' auld Mahoun –
He'd claucht for prey oor ain exciseman!
Yon was a satire unco bauld.
Tormentin' Holy Willie Fisher –
The elder steive o' Daddie Auld;
Faith, ye gied him nae scrimpit measure.
Stoot Captain Grose you famous made –
Him wha was sic great antiquary
Had lang gien up the sodger trade
For occupation quite contrairy
Yon was a gey queer epitaph
Anent him you supposed was deein'
Owre heavy was he mair than half
For Nick tae tak' tae Hades fleein'
A' thae an' meikle mair we'd missed
If happened had that sad mishanter:
This welcome date had been unblest
Had no been born then Rab the Ranter.
We'll no forget ye a' this year
Next Janwar' we'll invoke your presence
Again in spirit tae be here,
Inspirin' ither Burns' renaissance.



" When wild war's deadly blast was blawn
And gentle peace returning "

**Burns' One Hundred and Fifty-sixth
Anniversary, Jan. 25th, 1915.**

ODE 7.

Assembled here upon another natal night,
The earth has once more measured by its annual
flight

We celebrate the birth of him beloved the best
Of all the sons of song, by ev'ry land confessed.

Since last we met a lurid cloud of woe has spread
O'er Europe's fair and fertile fields whence peace
has fled;

And heaped with corpses stark the fatal war-god's
food,

Deep trenches filled with slain awelter in their
blood.

A change revolting, sad, since we forgathered here,
To millions of mankind, a dark and troublous year,
So we cannot meet as joyous as was our wont
While our brave compatriots are fighting at the
front.

But with th' immortal mem'ry wreath heroic
names

Of those engaged in battle strife with noble aims,
Thus hon'ring him who sang and those who fought,
The bay and laurel twining, and both with triumph
fraught.

Our poet sang in peaceful strains of wild war's
blast',

Rejoicing that its deadly reign had overpast.
No war-lust his whose sympathetic heart could
spare

A sigh while cursing murd'rer of the wounded here.

More insignificant the hapless little mouse
The coulter of his plow had 'reft of store and house,
Could not escape the tender all observant eye
That glowed with pity as it looked on misery.

He sang of Logan's flow'ry braes and bonnie burn
And of the absent soldier that never may return,
The mother of his bairns sheds sad tears of despair
While sighing for the joys she never may see mair.

How changed the scene when "Scots wha hae wi
Wallace bled!"

Peals forth in martial strains from fields dyed red!
Nor peace nor granted truce while feet of foemen
stand

Polluting sacred soil of our dear native land!

So shall the Scots meet foes as did their ancient
sires.

To German despot proving still burn heroic fires;
That Belgium's desolation avenged sure shall be,
Her soil of savage foemen purged, her King and
people free.

The enemies of Liberty at length must yield,
Might they call right shall conquer them on sea and
field.

The tide of war shall ebb across the River Rhine;
Their Kaiser proud compelled inglorious peace to
sign.

The Teutons humbled by defeat shall realize
Too late that hideous crimes have not won certain
prize.

Peace regnant shall proclaim on war the final ban
Welcome to all nations the brotherhood of man.



"Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drowned himsel' amang the nappy."

**Burns' One Hundred and Fifty-seventh
Anniversary, Jan. 25th, 1916.**

ODE 8.

1. There's no in a' braid Scotland fair,
A bonnier shire than that ca'd Ayr,
Where Nature's gathered routhie stores
O' lovely scenes within her shores.
2. Her mountains, valleys, lochs and streams,
Can be but marrow't in oor dreams.
Within't was waled wi' eident care
Doon's banks an' braes o' beauty rare.
3. An' when that spot was a' prepared,
Like auncient Eden's flow'ry yaird;
'Twas Janwar' o' seenteen five nine
The elements did a' combine
4. A stormy welcome cauld tae gie
Oor Rab wha was tae bear the gree
Owre a' the vot'ries o' the Nine,
That ever sang sin' auld lang syne.
5. Near All'way's Kirk his toddlin' feet
Aft stachered his dear dad tae meet;
On mony a simmer afternoon
He rowed amang the braes o' Doon.

6. He grew 'mang scenes that filled his heart
Wi' Nature's music without airt;
When only six an' but a bairn
He had tae help his meat tae earn.

7. His neist hame wasna far awa'
Where he upgrew—a laddie braw
In spite o' toilsome years an' share
O poortith's trials an' meikle care.

8. Mount Oliphant—a bonnie name
Where kindled was his youthfu' flame,
When handsome Nell his fancy won
An' love's uneven course begun.

9. At Lochlea neist he had his hame,
Where he, inspired, sune rose to fame;
Wi' skilfu' hand an' heart on fire,
He struck auld Caledonia's lyre.

10. There eke he joined Masonic band
St. James' famed in mony a land
On ilka nicht when lodge was o'er,
Wi' brithers blithe held social splore.

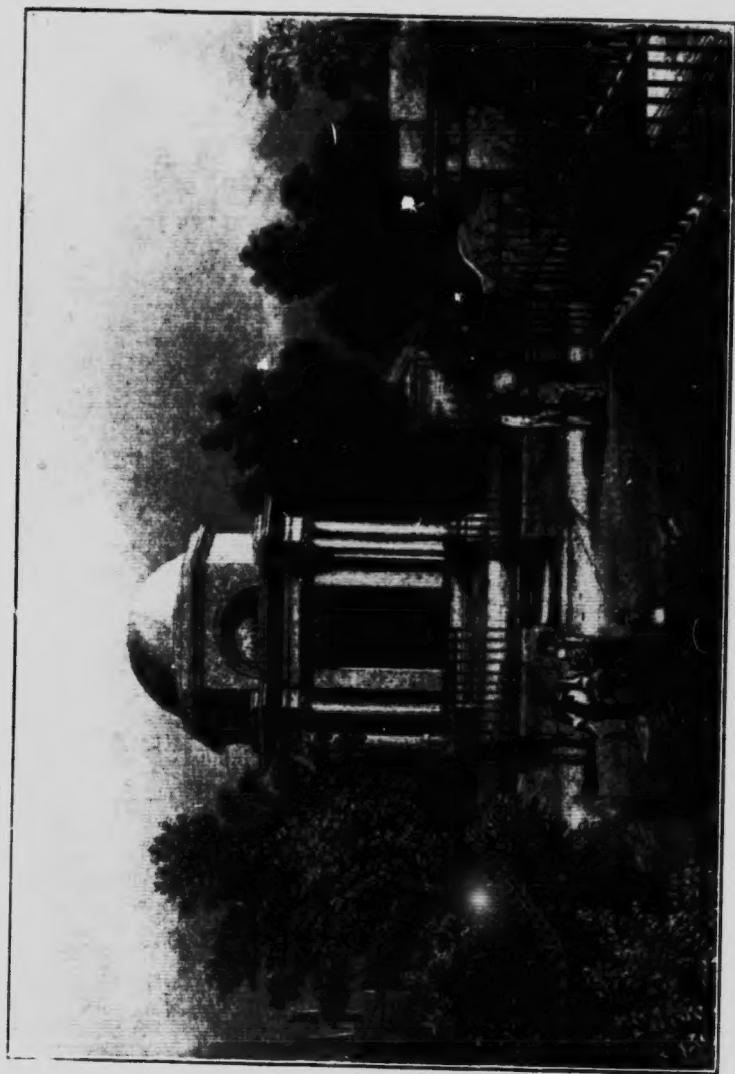
11. Mossiel claims honor o' neist hame,
Where genius bleezed wi' brichtest flame;
An' sune what frien's had lang received
E'en ilka fremit wicht believed.

12. He's campit noo in Embro toon;
E'en there he keeps the causey's croon,
An' Rab was hailed wi' welcome grand
Frac brawest folk in a' the land.
13. 'Mang nobles an' their leddies fair
The ploughman frac the banks o' Ayr
Proved weel in spite o' humble birth,
"A man's a man" owre a' the earth.
14. He's flittit neist tae Ellisland,
Where bonnie Jean new hame has fand.
There aft he roved the Muses with
Amang the windins' o' the Nith.
15. Here he met frien's o' gowden ring,
For wham it pleasure was tae sing.
Ae day auld Pegasus did canter,
An' Rab wrote reckless "Tam o' Shanter."
16. There tae frac pen inspired sprang
That waesome sad, despairin' sang
O' broken hearts disjoined forever
"Ae fond kiss and then we sever."
17. Three years - the last o' rural life
Were spent in guagin, sturt an' strife;
Then ruined farmer gied up lease
An' soucht new hame in Auld Dumfries.

18. 'Twas there he wrote brave "Scots Wha Hae,"
"Dear Highland Mary," "Duncan Gray,"
"For A' That"—frae unweary pen,
"The Wooer Braw cam' doon Lang Glen."
19. Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
An' Foreign groves o' myrtle sweet,
Lincluden's Vision bricht an' clear,
"A health tae ane that I lo'e dear."
20. Closed was his race 'mang fate's dark clouds,
Him poortith snell wi' cares enshrouds;
Yet looked he forth a hunner year,
Fortellt the fame he saw sae clear.
21. Sae here we're met anither nicht
To keep the chain o' mem'ry bricht;
As lang's the twenty-f' th returns,
The world will mind the birth o' Burns.



" We'll sleep thegither at the foot "



"Lies a' could dee o' Scotia's Bard
Sin' ninety-six lang sync."

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To Bro. P. B. Anderson
with compliments of
Wm Beattie



